Dear Colleagues,

We sincerely appreciate your willingness to serve on this Academic Continuity Planning Task Force for Academic Year 2020-2021. Our campus community is relying on this group to advocate and plan for our safety and well-being while demonstrating our abiding commitment to academic excellence and a supportive learning community. This semester presented unprecedented challenges. We are grateful for the persistence, creativity and ingenuity of our community members, and we recognize that we must plan to create the conditions for flexibility and resiliency in light of uncertainty. This cross-divisional task-force, jointly charged by the Provost and Faculty Senate Executive Committee, engages constituency groups, faculty, staff, and key leaders to develop plans for a successful launch next Fall. There is a great deal of work to do between now and Fall to successfully prepare.

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic presents us with unprecedented challenges for planning the delivery of university education. This current crisis has multi-dimensional complexities related to health, economic impact, technology, and culture to name a few. There is a high degree of uncertainty still about how the pandemic will unfold. We don't yet know how widely the virus has spread. We don't know the percentage of people who get infected and remain asymptomatic. We don't know if people who are infected and resolve are immune and, if they are, how long and to what degree that immunity may last. We don't know if the virus is seasonal and will recede in the summer. We don't know how strongly the virus may begin to spread again across the fall. Currently, the best estimates suggest a series of spikes or 'pulses' of infection that will necessitate local or regional (minimally) lockdowns that will lead to an easing of the pandemic (thus, the saw-tooth graphs that are circulating). Those variables make it hard to model the economic impacts of the pandemic across the coming year and how they will impact the state, our campus, our communities, and our students. We also don't know how the profound changes ongoing in everyday life (through social distancing practices and an increased reliance on a set of remote and virtual technologies) will impact our psyches and our cultural practices. It is likely that habits will be, at minimum, altered and, at maximum, shattered and discarded. The intersection of these issues will profoundly alter university practice in the coming years and certainly in AY20/21 but the shape of those changes is hard to determine. It is essential to begin to plan on how to deliver the curriculum and provide some essential features of the community and intellectual life of the university safely while simultaneously remaining committed to the cultivation of critical thought, reverence for the past, rigorous undergraduate, professional and graduate training, and cultivation of citizenship.

Given the high degree of uncertainty in the coming year, it is advisable to be prudent. Being prudent means acting with careful intention to the contexts of the local, regional, national, and global situation. We should not expect that we can deliver the curriculum of the university in Fall 2020 like we did in Fall 2019. The circumstances are simply too different. Nor should we expect that we can know with certainty what the world will look like in August, so we cannot just develop one plan; we must develop a range of plans that can be applied if certain 'thresholds' or

conditions are met. We must be carefully preparing along a number of tracks, some of which may require us to consider radical changes to our traditional practices and procedures.

In this development of a range of plans, we should be guided by facts and aim for flexibility and fairness. The question of how to deliver the curriculum in AY '20- '21 must be informed by the latest and best understanding of the pandemic, legal requirements, accreditation standards, and academic best practices. We cannot establish trust with our students and our communities without a commitment to safety; people need to feel minimally secure and must be assured that our actions and decisions are grounded in a realistic (and evolving) understanding of the pandemic. We must aim for flexibility given the both the uncertainty of the situation over the range of the next year and given the diversity of our academic programs. We should recognize that our planning must be enacted differently across the undergraduate, professional, and graduate curricula. Finally, we should be guided by and aspire to a set of plans that are fair. Our plans should recognize the range of needs, constraints, and challenges that our faculty, staff, and students face; while planning we should recognize the additional needs that the most vulnerable or challenged face and seek to provide support for them.

Lastly, it is important that we begin and move as quickly as possible. All around the country, universities of all types are engaged in this planning. Cal State Fullerton has already decided to deliver the whole of their curriculum remotely for F20; others (Stanford and Boston) are considering starting the AY in January 2021 and continuing the 'spring' in summer of 21; many are working on plans that can be differentiated across institutions that are at least as diverse as ours (Vanderbilt and University of Dayton). It is important that we not delay but proceed urgently.

Our Commitments

The recommendations and planning should align with the Restore Illinois plan and the work of the SIU System Planning Task Force. Fundamentally, we will work collaboratively and with commitment to shared governance.

- We will endeavor to support the safety and well-being of our campus community, with full consideration to the health conditions and vulnerabilities that may exist across populations
  - The Vice Chancellor for Administration will present a Phasing In and Safety Measures Plan that will promote good hygiene and a safe environment for learning, living and working.
  - We will take seriously our responsibilities of inclusion, equity, and access.
  - We will consider the mental health and well-being of our community.
- We will ensure the excellence of our programs and educational experiences for students, regardless of modality.
  - We will work to preserve high impact practices across the curriculum.
  - We will continue to promote community engagement, research experiences, internships, and clinical/practica.
  - We will identify opportunities to leverage technology to promote excellence in teaching and learning.
  - We will develop plans that address students' learning needs and the necessary supports to achieving our goals.
- We will work to preserve on-ground instruction and experiential learning, but we will do so in ways that are safe and appropriate.

- We will consider alternatives in pedagogy, modalities, scheduling and the academic calendar while ensuring educational quality.
- We will think creatively about how to utilize all of our space and resources.
- We will develop contingency plans that will allow for flexibility and a move to remote learning, should the State issue orders that requires remote or online learning.
- We will prepare for disruption.
- To the extent possible, we will work to develop and promote an active student-life and appropriate co-curricular programming, even when it must be delivered in new and creative ways.
- We will support conditions that allow faculty to safely pursue their research and creative activities.
  - We will continue to identify ways in which students can safely engage in research opportunities with faculty and participate in community engagement activities, as appropriate.

Charge

The Task Force is charged specifically to develop a range of recommendations and plans for each of the following issues. The Task Force should present its best sense of the advantages and disadvantages of recommended strategies and actions that will help achieve the following:

1) **Promote the safety of all members of our community, including those who may be more vulnerable (students, staff, faculty), thereby establishing and nurturing 'trust' on the campus.** All discussions regarding the delivery of the curriculum, continuity in research and creative activities, and reimagining academic support for students must be guided by consideration of safety for the health and well-being of the community. The academic continuity task force will coordinate closely with the Vice Chancellor for Administration as he leads the development of a Phasing In and Safety Measurers Plan.

2) **Consider the impact and feasibility of modifications to the academic calendar.** The Provost requests options for modifying the start of the Fall and Spring semesters, while recognizing that Fall schedules have been built and will need to be modified and integrated. Additional consideration to potential parts of term for block scheduling or modularity may also be considered. The Provost encourages the task force to consider the possibilities associated with the November break and how it might be leveraged to minimize the number of students on campus for experiential learning after the break. Crucially, we request that the Registrar and Enrollment Management be part of these discussions and that academic units are actively engaged in working through the potential benefits and challenges.

3) **Explore a variety of modes of delivery for the curriculum.** We seek a range of options for the delivery of the curriculum for AY '20-'21. That range should start with less radical options and move toward more creative reimagining of traditional offerings. The committee will review current articles that present options for Fall scenarios.

   For example, a minimal proposal might be to start all classes remotely (with synchronous meeting times) and transition after a month to face-to-face, on ground instruction; a moderate proposal may be hybridization of all classes from the start, such that half of each class is meeting face-to-face and the other half remotely in an alternating rhythm; and there are many other options. We must avoid "emergency remote learning," to the extent possible and

imagine contingencies and prepare appropriately. In considering recommendations, we ask the Task Force to consider:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of these (and other) models?
- What would the thresholds be that indicate which is most prudent?
- Further, can any of a number of proposals be applied uniformly across the university? What kinds of variability is necessary?
- How can we achieve safety, excellence, and fairness for students in different learning environments (art and performing arts classes as distinguished from labs as distinguished from graduate seminars)?
- How do we continue to promote and encourage experiential learning through community engagement?
- Finally, are their advantages (for density of people on campus or in a building at any given time) for considering (minimally, for Spring 2021) proposing to move more face-to-face (and/or hybrid) instruction to shorter blocks (8- and 5-weeks blocks)?

  - What logistical and operational hurdles would that pose?
  - Could we reimagine the use of space on campus later into the evening and on the weekends (Saturday and Sunday)?

4) **Support the Continuity of Research and Creative Activities and High-Impact Engagement.** The Provost requests a range of options for considering how to support faculty in their research and creative activities in the coming academic year, with particular consideration to how we continue to engage students in undergraduate and graduate research opportunities.

- Undoubtedly within our Teacher-Scholar Model, we must consider what challenges will faculty face conducting research or carrying out their creative projects and how might those challenges be overcome?
- How scholarship linked to community engagement be supported and achieved under new and evolving constraints?
- What needs will faculty have?
- How will those be different across the disciplines? And how will they be the same?
- How should research and creative activity be measured for the year?
- Should additional accommodations be made in relation to tenure and promotion timelines, particularly in regards to Summer 20 and Fall 20, while more uncertainty in the delivery of the curriculum is particularly high?

5) **Ensure thoughtful assessment strategies and supportive evaluation procedures during AY '20- '21.** The Provost requests a range of options for the assessing of faculty teaching and student learning for AY '20- '21. For institutional accreditation, we must assure that learning outcomes are consistent or comparable, regardless of modality. Additionally, we want to ensure that these extraordinary environmental constraints do not harm faculty or students in ways that could be reasonably mitigated with careful action by the University. Questions to consider include:

- How does the policy-approved SET have to be modified for next academic year?
- How does the use of the SET (for faculty tenure and promotion) have to be reconsidered?

- What are the implications (the advantages and disadvantages) of the range of proposals?
- What new data do we need to inform our academic planning and quality improvement efforts?

6) Develop student-centered 'onboarding' and support for new students, transfers, and returning students. We seek options for what will be necessary to promote successful transitions for all students for AY20-21.

- How can the SIUE Experience be reimagined? Does it have to be transformed or reimagined? Can it be delivered face-to-face, hybrid or done virtually?
- Given that students' last year of high school was interrupted, what additional supports have to be put in place to support first-year students?
- How can we reinvent the richness of a university community if physical distancing guidelines are in place?
- What sort of zoom/remote events will be necessary?
- How can advising function in (minimally) a hybrid fashion?
- What supports will the advising offices need?
- What supports should be in place for transfer students?
- What supports will returning students need to remain engaged in their education if much of campus community life is suspended?
- What technological supports and training will students need to flourish in our evolving academic environment?
- What other supports are critical in recreating a thriving on-campus community for students and our broader community?

We ask for mindfulness regarding these matters with considerations of diversity, inclusion, equity and fairness. We can see that the impact of the pandemic is differential, highlighting class and race disparities of power and access. We must attend to the differential supports that will be necessary for all students, with particular consideration of under-served and students who may be vulnerable.

7) Support institutional and 'curricular' resilience. We need advice and options about how to build resilience across Academic Affairs in relation to best practices in remote/hybrid learning that recognize and reward the work faculty and staff members are doing to deliver the curriculum effectively in radically new ways. Prudentially, we should be prepared to move more often and more regularly to hybridized teaching where remote and face-to-face instruction are blended. Many faculty and staff are gaining experience (success and failures) in that mode right now; they will gain more in the coming months and years.
- How can departments and units develop resilience in delivering that curriculum?
- How can we combine best-practices and best-content across sections of a single course, families of courses, departments, and units?
- Can departments (or clusters of departments or units) develop 'archives' of best modules (like what is happening in the FST) that can be deployed by multiple faculty?
- How then can the creators of that content be compensated for their work?
- Can we develop a 'pay-per-use' model that would encourage various creators to share content in hybridized courses (and remote and online)? If so, what considerations should be made?

This Task Force should examine these issues while recognizing that for many faculty the terms and conditions of employment, including compensation, will be negotiated with appropriate bargaining units and honoring the University's responsibilities to bargain.

8) Other. The Co-Chairs of the Task Force are authorized to bring forward other suggestions and recommendations to the Provost related to academic delivery and continuity of scholarship under the guidance of the task force as conversations unfold and creative ideas emerge.

The Task Force will provide a formal report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, the Provost, and Chancellor's Council. The requisite Vice Chancellor and Chancellor will make decisions about final implementation with consideration to legal considerations, compliance, accreditation, budget, and feasibility while focusing on ensuring the safety of our community and excellence in our academic experience.

Membership

School of Business:	Janice Joplin; Ayse Evrensel
College of Arts and Sciences:	Jill Anderson; Sue Wiediger
School of Dental Medicine:	Bruce Rotter
School of Education, Health, and Human Behavior:	Huaibo Xin; Alison Reeves
School of Engineering:	Chris Gordon; Igor Crk
School of Nursing:	Ann Popkess
School of Pharmacy:	Jingyang Fan Hecht
Library and Information Sciences:	Marlee Graser
Information Technology Services:	Steve Huffstutler
Staff Senate President :	Ian Toberman
Graduate Council:	E. Duff Wrobbel
Diversity Council:	Venessa Brown
Black Faculty and Staff Association:	Lakesha Butler
Student Government President:	Jacob Graham
Non-Tenure Track Faculty Association:	Laurie Wolff
Faculty Association:	Mark Poepsel
Office of International Affairs:	Mary Weishaar
ACCESS:	Dominic Dorsey
Enrollment Management:	Scott Belobrajdic
Student Affairs:	Miriam Roccia
Director of Health Services:	Riane Greenwalt
Provost's Delegate:	Eric W. Ruckh, Co-Chair
Faculty Senate President:	Jocelyn DeGroot, Co-Chair
Science Advisor:	Elizabeth Cady
Improvisation/imagination advisor:	Charles Harper

Timeline – Proposed Target Dates

24 April-7 May:	Task force formed and planned; charge is developed
By 7 May:	Composition of task force (and charge) announced to campus
11 May-5 June:	Task force meets 6-10 times to initiate meeting (with science advisor), develop working groups, have working groups meet and develop plans for specific issues identified (reaches out to campus community through some

	sort of web-platform to get dynamic feedback), synthesize that work and develop contingency plans for academic delivery
6-8 June:	Co-Chairs draft proposal and recommendations for curricular delivery
9/10 June:	Task force presents draft proposal to Provost and Deans; gets feed back
11/12 June	Task force revises
13-16 June:	Co-chairs finalize revision and distribute
17-19 June:	Task Force presents first draft to the Chancellor's Council, Provost's Senior Staff, Faculty Senate Executive Committee
By 26 June:	Provost and Chancellor Announce Plan for delivery of Fall 2020

ACTF continues to meet to develop plans for other charges.

Jocelyn DeGroot,
Faculty Senate President
Associate Professor of Applied Communication Studies

Eric W. Ruckh
Honors Program Director
Associate Professor of History

P. Denise Cobb
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Professor of Sociology